

Stories of the Pilgrims by Margaret B. Pumphrey

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THE SWORD OF MILES STANDISH

[82]

AMONG those who went to John Robinson's church was Captain Miles Standish. He was an Englishman, but he had lived many years in Holland, where he went to help the Dutch fight for their freedom.

Once while he was fighting in Holland, some soldiers went to the house of an old man who made swords and armor. They took some of the armor and were threatening to harm the old man and his daughter.

Captain Standish saw them, and shouted, "You cowards! To steal from a poor old man! Cowards! Give back everything you have taken." And the rude soldiers obeyed.

Then to the trembling old man he said, "No harm shall come to you, so do not be afraid. Your life is safe, and your daughter, too, is free from danger. Go back to your shop in peace."

The old man could not thank him then; his heart was too full. But that night Miles Standish heard a knock at his door. When he looked out, he saw the old sword maker standing in the darkness. He had something carefully wrapped in his cloak.

"Captain Standish," he said, "you are a brave, brave soldier. You are more than that; you are a [83] kind and noble man." Then, holding out the gift he had brought, the man said, "Take this sword and take with it the heart-felt thanks of an old man whose life and whose daughter you have saved."

Miles Standish could not refuse without giving pain, so he took the man's gift. It was a fine old sword which had been made in the Far East hundreds of years before Miles Standish was born. On one side were engraved the sun, moon, and stars. On the other side were some words written in an old, old language.

The Captain thanked the man and said, "This sword shall always be my friend. It shall always be ready to help those who are in trouble." He named the sword "Gideon," and he sometimes spoke to it as though it were a friend.

But now the war was over, and though it had been ten years since Miles Standish had needed "Gideon," it always hung at his side.

Captain Standish often talked with the Pilgrims about their plan of going to America. He thought about the savages who lived in the new land, and about the ships from other countries which might try to take their town.

"I will go with you to your new home," he said. "There may be work for 'Gideon' and me."

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